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NOTES AND ABSTRACTS

Beginnings of a Psychopathic Laboratory in the Criminal Courts of Baltimore.—In 1915, while a member of the house staff of the Phipps Psychiatric Clinic of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, I had a dispensary case which brought me into touch with one of the city police courts. Nothing was known there of modern psychiatric methods, but the presiding magistrate happened to be a very broad-minded man, anxious to make use of anything that would help him to solve the problems brought before him. So, whenever I had a free hour from the clinic, I devoted it to getting a thorough knowledge of this one police court, and to showing the magistrate as well as the police exactly what psychiatry and medical jurisprudence had to offer them. Gradually my work was extended to other police courts. Later to the highest tribunals, the two Criminal Courts of the Supreme Bench. Here I found a very staunch friend and supporter in Judge Gorter. For two years I have been devoting almost all my mornings to these two courts, examining delinquents for mental deficiency, making reports on questions of medical jurisprudence and criminology, both for the judges as well as for the district attorney's office. By this time (1918) I was on the visiting staff of the Phipps Clinic, with my own private practice, so that I was free to dispose of more of my time. In January, 1918, a bill was introduced into the Maryland legislature appropriating \$5,000 yearly for a medical service at the Criminal Courts. This bill passed the House, but was killed in the Senate.

Finally, in June, 1918, the Supreme Bench decided to create the position of medical adviser, with the salary of a bailiff, which they had the power to do without consulting the legislature. I was appointed on June 26th.

This, we hope, is only the first step in the direction of a laboratory, which shall be, not only for the study of psychopathic questions, but also for problems of current criminology and of medical jurisprudence. The mayor of Baltimore, Mr. Preston, has always been very sympathetic when I have spoken to him of my hopes, and there is a possibility that, with his aid, we may next year secure from the City Board of Estimates the necessary appropriation.

During the coming year I intend to spend some weeks visiting those cities which have psychopathic laboratories, so that I may get the benefit of their experience.—JOHN R. OLIVER, Supreme Court, Baltimore.

The following from the *Baltimore Star*, June 26, 1918, relates to Dr. Oliver's activities in the court:

"Judge Gorter today announced that the Supreme Bench, realizing the pressing need of a proper medical examination into criminal cases in the local courts, has appointed Dr. John R. Oliver, an alienist of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, as the medical court officer for this purpose.

"Dr. Oliver has given his services to the Criminal Courts for the last two years without any compensation whatever, and he will now receive as court officer a modest salary. He is one of the best-trained nerve specialists and psychologists of this country and has had a wide acquaintance with mental diseases in relation to crime both in America and abroad. He was on the Phipps house staff for two years and has for some time been on the visiting

staff of the institution. Judge Gorter says he has found Dr. Oliver's services in the Criminal Courts invaluable."

COURTS—LAW

Report of the Vagrancy Court in Chicago.—(Criminal Branch No. 1, Municipal Court of Chicago).—*Report of Activities from January 29, 1918, to June 24, 1918.*—(Reprinted from the Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council, City of Chicago, for June 28, 1918, pages 543-7.)—"The power of the legislature to define vagrancy is beyond a doubt. Section 270, Chapter 38, Revised Illinois Statutes, has extended the common law vagrant to include juggling or other unlawful games or plays, runaways, pilferers, confidence men, common drunkards, night walkers, lascivious persons, common railers and brawlers, persons who habitually mis-spend their time by frequenting houses of ill-fame, gaming houses or tippling shops, and "all persons who are known to be thieves, burglars, or pickpockets, either by their own confession or otherwise or by having been convicted of larceny, burglary, or other crime against the laws of the State, punishable, etc., and having no lawful means of support, are habitually found prowling around any" (enumerating many public places) "shall be deemed to be and they are declared to be vagabonds." The penalty clause provides a sentence in the House of Correction or County Jail of not less than ten days and not exceeding six months, or the imposition of a fine of not less than \$20 nor more than \$100 and costs of suit.

"The first cases in the so-called Vagrancy Branch of the Court were heard January 29, 1918, and practically all the cases tried since that date, with the exception of the cases of women, have been charged under that portion of the Statute commencing 'All persons who are known to be thieves,' etc., probably 95 per cent of the cases of men have been charged with the offense of vagrancy in an information charging that the defendant 'was an idle and dissolute person and was habitually neglectful of his employment and calling and did not lawfully provide for himself and neglected all lawful business and did habitually mis-spend his time without giving a good account of himself and is known to be a thief having no lawful means of support and is habitually found prowling in and loitering around thoroughfares and tippling shops, in violation of Section 270, Chapter 38, of the Revised Statutes of the State of Illinois.' . . .

"In this large array of cases it is apparent that there has been in Chicago a criminal class, properly designated as 'thieves,' a class without a permanent fixed residence, who may be found generally in company with other well-known thieves at any hour of the day or night at any one of a thousand places, prowling or loitering, without any visible means of support or honest employment.

"The general term 'thief' embraces a variety of activities: burglary, hold-up, robbery, larceny, safe blower, confidence men, shoplifter, pickpocket, wagon thieves, jackrollers, purse-snatchers, and petty pilferers. These all have had their day in court, charged as vagabonds.

"There have been rare instances where the proof of thieving was limited to a single offense or conviction. Ordinarily, the record shows anywhere from three or four offenses to fifteen or twenty, and the record further shows the individual's activities are not limited to any one city. To me it is a compliment